

The Irish Government, Marriage and the Family in 2008

Need for "Some Policies That Actually Strengthen Marriage Rather Than Weaken It"

"All across the Western world the family is in serious trouble", according to an *Irish Catholic* newspaper editorial. Editor, Garry O'Sullivan, noted that "here in Ireland, for example, cohabitation has risen four-fold in just 10 years and marital breakdown has risen five-fold. A quarter of children are raised outside the marital family."



He said that all "good research shows that the family based on marriage is the best environment for children. A pro-child society must therefore be a pro-marriage one."

He noted that in 2008 the Irish Government is "set to make two major decisions concerning marriage and the family". One will see the recognition of same-sex unions. The only question left unanswered, he said, "is just how closely this will resemble marriage itself. If it resembles it too closely then the Government will be declaring, in effect, that marriage policy is no longer focused on children and their welfare, but on adult sexual unions". Mr O'Sullivan said that this would be a "deeply irrational and retrograde move".

He also referred to the Government's plans for a children's rights referendum later this year "although", he pointed out, "to call it a *children's rights* referendum is misleading".

The nub of this issue, he argued, is whether or not the State should be given more power to intervene in family life over and above the power it currently has. In every child's life an adult has to make the major decisions concerning his or her welfare and the question is whether that adult should be a parent or an employee of the State.

He also pointed out that if this referendum is badly worded it will give unjustified and unwarranted powers to officials of the State to make decisions on behalf of children. If this happens "it deserves to be defeated".

Overall, he concluded, it has to be said that this Government, while it has a family policy of sorts, has no marriage policy. In the ten years it has been in office it has shown no recognition of the fact that marriage is the form of family of most benefit to children and has instead been giving every impression that it believes marriage is of no particular benefit thereby making it worthy of special support. It is time, he said, "we saw some policies that actually strengthen marriage rather than weaken it".

The Irish Catholic. January 3. (Courtesy of Family & Life)

